

THE HONORABLE BOB GOODLATTE
CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

REVIEW OF MULTILATERAL AND BILATERAL
AGRICULTURAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

JUNE 18, 2003

Thank you all very much for coming to the committee hearing. The topic of today's hearing is a review of multilateral and bilateral agricultural trade negotiations and I want to welcome all of our witnesses. We will hear from representatives of major agricultural organizations, all representing the crops grown in the United States.

It is important to hear their views on the current agricultural negotiations, which include the World Trade Organization and the Free Trade Area of the Americas. Other negotiations going on that will have an impact on U.S. agriculture include the Central America Free Trade Area (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua), Morocco, Singapore, the Southern African Customs Union (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland), and Australia.

In addition, the Administration and the government of Bahrain have announced the intention to begin negotiations for a FTA. Other possible FTA's include countries in the Middle East and Thailand.

Just last month the committee heard from Secretary Veneman and Ambassador Zoellick on issues related to agricultural trade and the WTO negotiations. This hearing is a continuation of the promise I made at the beginning of this Congress that the Committee intends to pay very close attention to all trade negotiations and to listen to U.S. agriculture's views on this important matter.

This includes ongoing multilateral trade negotiations and all regional and bilateral negotiations. It also includes oversight of past agreements, such as with China, and other accessions to the WTO, such as Russia. It means looking closely at problems U.S. agriculture faces regarding sanitary and phytosanitary issues, such as those with Australia.

I am pleased that the Administration has acted regarding the problems U.S. agriculture has with some exports to Mexico. On Monday, Ambassador Zoellick announced that the U.S. is filing a WTO case against Mexico in connection with Mexico's antidumping orders on U.S. beef and U.S. rice. Again, the Committee will follow this matter closely, including those issues with other agricultural exports to Mexico.

United States agriculture depends on exports and a vibrant trade policy is important to United States farmers and ranchers. We want to seek greater opportunity for our agricultural products and trade negotiations can make that possible. U.S. agricultural markets are already open to imports and our tariffs are low—agricultural tariffs worldwide average about 62 percent, while U.S. agricultural tariffs are 12 percent. It is to the advantage of U.S.

agriculture that we continue to open markets and remove barriers to our agriculture exports.

I know that many of our witnesses pay close attention both individually and through organized groups such as the Agriculture Policy Advisory Committee and the several Agriculture Technical Advisory Committees. You should continue to make sure that both USDA and USTR are aware of the impact of trade agreements and negotiations on your members back home. This hearing will provide a means to share your views and theirs with me and other committee members.

Thank you for participating in this hearing.